

Independent Living Youth Transitions Coordinator Funding

Request

We request that funds originally requested through DSD to fund a transitions coordinator be restored as outlined in our original request.

Background

In the summer of 2007 the disability community held a series of statewide MetNet meetings as well as a get together in October of that year to determine what the greatest needs were among the entire community. From these meetings, youth in transition and the coordination of statewide transition efforts emerged as one of the top priority areas among the disability community. As a result of these efforts, the Independent Living community worked with DPHHS and the Disability Services Division to put forth an EPP proposal that was sent to the Governor's office requesting \$50,000/year to allow the Disability Services Division to contract with the Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF) to establish a staff position that would allow for the continued implementation of the statewide Montana Youth Transitions (MYTransitions) Project, which includes the coordination of the state transition conference, maintaining the MYTransitions web site, as well as coordinating statewide Disability Mentoring Day activities; and to establish a statewide system of coordination and communication with the Governor's Advisory Council on Disability and other disability and transition related task forces.

Need

The Montana Office of Public Instruction school year 2007-2008 show that there are 6,287 students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 in Montana schools.

Of those 6,287 youth with disabilities, the top five categories are as follows:

- 3,775 or 60% have a learning disability
- 831 or 13% have other health impairments
- 497 or 7.9% have an emotional disturbance
- 454 or 7.2% have a developmental disability
- 229 or 3.6% have multiple disabilities

All 6,287 youth will need to plan for their transition to a successful life with a disability after exiting the school system.

Montana needs a coordinated, sustainable approach on the issue of transition. A group of agencies in the public and private sector have worked to create MYTransitions Project which includes a statewide web site (www.montanayouthtransitions.org) and an annual conference that is specific to transition and is cross-disability in approach.

Funds are needed to continue to work of these partners. We are seeking one time only funds through the Federal Reinvestment Act and HB 645 to fund this \$50,000/year budget request to hire a staff person to administer the MYTransitions Web Site, coordinate the annual conference, and coordinate a statewide Disability Mentoring Day. Additionally these funds will be used to conduct regional meetings related to the topic of transition.

The partners in MYTransitions Project have created a framework for partnership between the public and private sector, have demonstrated that these efforts can be sustainable, and now we need the state to become a partner in this transition effort. There are 6,287 reasons why the state should assist in the sustainability of the MYTransitions Project.